

Covert Ops & Washington's Contingency Plans for North Korea

By [Nile Bowie](#)

Global Research, May 31, 2012

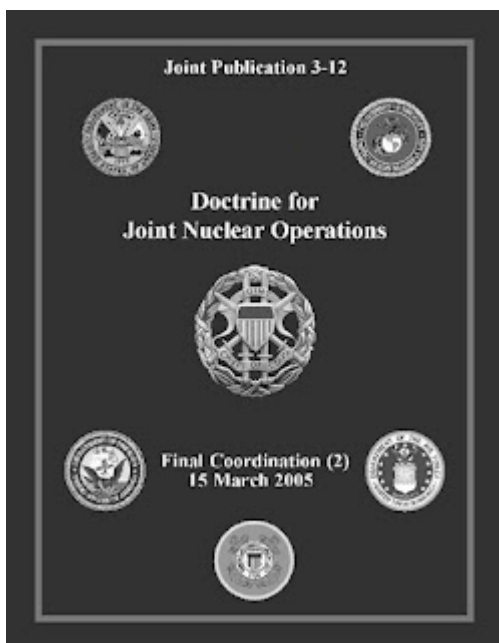
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As the long-standing tensions between Washington and Pyongyang remain enflamed, a media report accusing South Korean and US Special Forces of parachuting into North Korea to spy on underground military facilities has sparked further controversy. Journalist David Axe attended the Special Operations Forces Industry Conference in Florida, and claims to have heard Army Brigade General Neil Tolley discussing the difficulties of conducting human surveillance operations in North Korea, while speaking in the present tense, referring to current operations. Axe's story "[U.S. Commandos Spy on North Korea](#)" was pulled from *The Diplomat*, which later posted a clarification suggesting that Tolley was referring to future plans, rather than current operations. Washington has vehemently denied these allegations and has accused Axe of fabricating the quotes. Brigade General Neil Tolley has since reviewed his presentation at the Special Forces Industry Conference and claims that he was "accurately quoted" by David Axe of *The Diplomat*.



While the details of future US-led reconnaissance operations on North Korean soil remain questionable, Washington's legal doctrine and policy initiatives toward Pyongyang offer further insight into future US-led directives aimed at ultimately extinguishing the North Korean threat by force. A 2009 policy-paper authored by *The Council on Foreign Relations* entitled "[Preparing for Sudden Change in North Korea](#)" advocates the deployment of up to 460,000 foreign soldiers into a post-regime North Korea to maintain security and capture Pyongyang's WMDs. The March 2005 "[Doctrines for Joint Nuclear Operations](#)" released by the Joint Chiefs of Staff envisages "contingency plans" for

an offensive first strike use of nuclear weapons against both Iran and North Korea, providing the legal framework to carry out pre-emptive nuclear war, both in terms of military planning as well as defense procurement and production; the document cites:

“The lessons of military history remain clear: unpredictable, irrational conflicts occur. Military forces must prepare to counter weapons and capabilities that exist in the near term even if no immediate likely scenarios for war are at hand. To maximize deterrence of WMD use, it is essential US forces prepare to use nuclear weapons effectively and that US forces are determined to employ nuclear weapons if necessary to prevent or retaliate against WMD use.”

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[Clarification on North Korea](#), The Diplomat, March 29, 2012

[Context of the Korean Special Forces Story](#), War is Boring, March 28, 2012

[US, South Korea soldiers parachute into North Korea for spying: Cmdr.](#) PressTV, March 29, 2012

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